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AUTHOR Onwuegbuzie, Anthony J.; Jiao, Qun G.; Daley, Christine E.
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ABSTRACT

This study compared native and non-native English-speaking university students with respect to frequency of library usage and reasons for using the library, as well as differences between these groups with respect to levels of library anxiety. Findings were intended to be used in the planning and implementation of library services for international students. Two instruments were used in the study: the Demographic Information Form (DIF), and the Library Anxiety Scale (LAS), a Likert-format instrument that assesses levels of library anxiety according to five subscales (barriers with staff, affective barriers, comfort with the library, knowledge of the library, and mechanical barriers). Subjects comprised 522 undergraduate and graduate students from two universities. These students came from 15 non-English-speaking countries representing the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. Findings suggested that: (1) non-native English-speaking students visited the library more frequently than native English speakers; (2) for both non-native and native English-speaking students, obtaining a book or article for a course paper was the most common reason for using the library, followed by studying for a test; and (3) non-native English speakers had higher levels of library anxiety associated with barriers with staff, affective barriers, and mechanical barriers, and lower levels of library anxiety associated with knowledge of the library than native English speakers. (Contains 25 references.) (MES)

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The Experience of Non-Native English-Speaking Students in Academic Libraries in The United States

Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie
Department of Educational Leadership
Valdosta State University

Qun G. Jiao
Baruch College
The City University of New York

Christine E. Daley
Clinch County Schools
Homerville, GA

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A.J. Onwuegbuzie

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Non-Native English-Speaking Students: Usage of Academic Libraries

The last three decades have seen a large increase in the number of international students attending institutions of higher education in the United States (Liu, 1993). Indeed, the United States currently has the largest number of international students, comprising approximately one-third of the world's total (Liu, 1993). Originally, international students enrolled in universities in the United States came primarily from European countries, where the economy and culture were similar to that of the United States (Liu, 1993). Presently, however, international students come from more than 180 countries--the majority of these countries being such that English is neither an official language nor a medium of instruction (MacDonald & Sarkodie-Mensah, 1988). Accordingly, many international students have to make major adjustments to the United States' academic environment.

Libraries represent one area to which international students have to adjust. The previous library experiences of these students is a critical determinant of how much adjustment to the United States library system is needed. Many international students utilize academic libraries in their home countries in order to study rather than for information-seeking purposes (Koehler & Swanson, 1988). As such, many international students arrive in the United States with limited library skills (Allen, 1993). Even more importantly, international students often come to the United States with erroneous beliefs about the function of U.S. libraries. These differences influence international students' expectations of

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library services (Mood, 1982). Those who believe that the role of libraries is minimal for their academic success are likely to be overwhelmed by the scope of information available and the resources by which they can obtain this information. Thus, using a college library can be an intimidating experience for many international students (Wayman, 1984).

Depending on their country of origin, international students face an array of difficulties when utilizing academic libraries. In fact, the less proficient they are with English, the more difficulties that international students appear to encounter in using libraries (Liu, 1993; Wayman, 1984). Apart from language and cultural differences, technological difficulties appear to be another major barrier facing international students in U.S. academic libraries (Liu, 1993). The use of various types of library media such as on-line catalogues, microfiche, and microfilm are unfamiliar to most international students (Koehler & Swanson, 1988).

According to Liu (1993), although much literature appears to exist pertaining to international students' library skills, most authors have focused on library orientation and bibliographic instruction. As such, a paucity of empirical research exists which has investigated the patterns of behavior or experience of international students while using U.S. libraries (Bilal, 1990). Even less research has been undertaken on international students from non-English-speaking countries (Liu, 1993). In any case, most quantitative studies on international students were undertaken before the use of microcomputers became an integral part of the

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library search process (Allen, 1993). According to Natowitz (1995), it is important that librarians have greater access to research in this area. Indeed, Garcha and Russell (1993) stated: "For educators, facilitators or librarians etc. to better serve this target population, the first step is to understand and rechannel ideas about international students....Besides considering language and cultural differences,..., knowledge of library usage must not be overlooked" (p. 16).

Thus, this study is an attempt to add to the limited body of empirical research on the role of libraries in the education of international students. Moreover, this study was a response to the growing need among academic libraries to understand how international students utilize the libraries' services and resources. Specifically, this study compares native and non-native English-speaking university students with respect to their frequency of library usage and their reasons for using the library. Also of interest was to determine if differences exist between these groups with respect to levels of library anxiety. It was hoped that the information from this study would assist in the planning and implementing of library services for international students.

Method

Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study: the Demographic Information Form (DIF) and the Library Anxiety Scale (LAS). The (DIF), which was developed specifically for this study, recorded relevant demographic information. The LAS, developed by Bostick

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(1992) is a 43-item, 5-point Likert-format instrument which assesses levels of library anxiety. The instrument has five subscales, namely, barriers with staff, affective barriers, comfort with the library, knowledge of the library, and mechanical barriers.

Subjects and Procedure

Subjects comprised 522 students from a mid-southern (61.7%) and a northeastern (38.3%) university. Participants were students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses across different disciplinary areas, comprising freshmen (28.7%, sophomores (30.6%), juniors (15.7%), seniors (11.5%), and graduates (13.4%). The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 60 years (M = 22.5, SD = 6.9). Slightly more than one-half of the sample (62.9%) were female. Also, approximately one fourth (24.5%) were non-native English speakers. These students came from 15 non-English-speaking countries representing the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. All subjects were administered the LAS and the DIF during class sessions.

Results

Findings suggest that (1) non-native English-speaking students visited the library more frequently than did native English speakers; (2) for both non-native and native English-speaking students, obtaining a book or an article for a course paper was the most common reason cited for using the library, followed by studying for a test; and (3) non-native English speakers had higher levels of library anxiety associated with "barriers with staff," "affective barriers," and "mechanical barriers," and lower levels of library

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anxiety associated with "knowledge of the library" than did native English speakers. A discriminant analysis (Table 1) revealed that the reasons for using the library which best distinguished these two populations of students were to study for a test, to study for a class project, to obtain a book or article for a paper, to search information about potential employers, to read books on reserve, to read current newspapers, and to read own textbook.

Discussion

This study provides overwhelming evidence that non-native English-speaking students visit the library more frequently than do their counterparts. In addition, these students appear to utilize the library to a greater extent for a variety of reasons. Interestingly, these finding occurred despite the fact that the non-native English speakers tended to live further from the academic library than did their counterparts. In addition, the fact that non-native English-speaking students tend to use the library more than do native English speakers in order to study for a test, to a study for a class project, and to read their own textbook, may be because these are the major functions of academic libraries in many foreign countries. Similarly, it is likely that international students utilize U.S. libraries more to read books on reserve because of their experiences in their native country, where libraries often are used as places to study, rather than as venues to conduct library searches (Pearce, 1981).

The finding that non-native English speakers visit the library more than do their counterparts in order to obtain a book or article

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for a paper might reflect their difficulties in undertaking library searches. That is, international students take longer to accomplish such tasks in the library and thus have to make more trips. Thus, librarians should give assistance to international students with all aspects of the library search process, including the use of periodicals, on-line catalogs, and computerized indexes.

Furthermore, the finding that a relatively high proportion of non-native speakers tend to use the library for job-related library searches may reflect the fact that these students, who typically are subjected to strict immigration requirements, have limited career options, at least initially. Also, the use of the library by many non-native speakers to read current newspapers indicates an attempt to keep up-to-date with issues relating to their own countries, since libraries tend to subscribe to newspapers from around the world.

The finding that non-native English speakers had lower levels of library anxiety associated with knowledge of the library may reflect the fact that they visit the library more frequently than do their counterparts and thus have had the opportunity to become more familiar with the location of books, periodicals, and the like. This finding also could reflect the fact that non-native English speakers had taken more library skills courses and thus possibly had been exposed to more library tours. However, a somewhat disturbing finding was that non-native English-speaking students reported higher levels of library anxiety associated with barriers with staff and affective barriers, despite the fact that they had taken more

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bibliographic instruction courses. Further investigation revealed that the library instruction programs at the institutions where the study took place tended to consist entirely of a delineation of search strategies. Researchers (Mellon, 1986) have found that such programs can increase anxiety levels due to the volume and complexity of the information available and because students do not retain much information from library instruction sessions. Thus, library instructors should consider incorporating information about library anxiety into their presentations (Mellon, 1988, 1989). As Mellon (1986) asserted, more important than imparting knowledge of the library system, may be to provide the maximum interaction between students and the library instructor, since this seems to reduce anxiety (Mellon, 1986). In particular, affective skills development, which has not been the focus of library instruction (Zahner, 1993), should be incorporated, since improvement in attitudes toward libraries following instruction based on affective skills development has been found (Ramey, 1985).

Furthermore, since library instruction courses may not provide sufficient time to develop an extensive knowledge and appreciation of search strategies (Mellon, 1988), and since only a relatively small proportion of students take library instruction classes (Farber, 1988), instructors should consider incorporating library instruction into their existing courses, where possible. This recommendation appears to be justified by the finding that library instruction which is directly integrated with assignments is more effective than is general instruction (Oberman, 1984). As suggested

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by Egan (1992), instructors who assign projects requiring library research should consider assisting non-native English-speaking students in the initial stages of their research, since these stages often present students with the greatest difficulty and highest anxiety levels (Oberman, 1984). As such, international students' metacognitive awareness of the research process should be developed, thereby providing the cognitive and affective framework for self-reliant searching and information management (Kuhlthau, Turock, George, & Belvin, 1990). Indeed, it appears that when teachers confer in the library with beginning researchers, these students develop positive attitudes toward library research (Egan, 1992). Thus, faculty should consider accompanying their students to the library and, in particular, be sensitive to the needs of international students. By doing so, they would not only have the opportunity to act as a liaison between these students and the reference librarians (Egan, 1992), but they may also gain appreciation of the complexities of the library, possibly culminating in the setting of more realistic library research assignments (Mellon, 1986, 1988, 1989).

The finding that non-native English speakers had higher levels of library anxiety associated with mechanical barriers, even though these students had taken relatively more computer courses, highlights the uniqueness of the library search process. Specifically, competence in using computers may not alleviate sufficiently the anxiety of international students when they are attempting to conduct a library computer search. In addition, the

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library anxiety of international students, which arises as a result of using mechanical library equipment such as photocopy and change machines, possibly reflects their inexperience, since these resources often are not available to them in academic libraries in their home countries (Allen, 1993; Koehler & Swanson, 1988; Pearce, 1981). Thus, librarians and library staff should monitor library equipment, being proactive in providing assistance, especially to international students, since many students perceive asking for help as a failure (Keefer, 1993).

The high levels of overall library anxiety reported by international students probably stem from cultural differences, communication difficulties, and the inability to conceptualize and to apply the English language system (Goudy & Moushey, 1984). In addition, uncertainties about what behaviors are appropriate, as well as what levels of service are available may prevail for these students (Altan, 1987). In any case, the present research findings support the contention that international students may experience significantly greater problems adapting to and using the library than do their counterparts (Goudy & Moushey, 1984). Nevertheless, the relatively high level of library anxiety associated with these components does not appear to lead to avoidance behaviors, since these students visit and utilize the library more than do their counterparts.

Although librarians cannot be expected to teach English to international students, they must provide assistance to these students with all aspects of the library search process, including

the use of periodicals, on-line catalogs, and computerized indexes. In addition, librarians and college officials who have responsibilities for international students should coordinate their efforts in this area.

Library administrators should consider hiring qualified multilingual librarians in order to assist non-native English-speaking students. In addition, the role of librarians should be defined clearly to users in order to prevent students from holding the erroneous belief that their questions are too basic, that by asking questions they will disturb the librarian (Swope & Katzer, 1972), or that the librarian should impart information only to a select few, as is the current perception held by many international students (Koehler & Swanson, 1988). Librarians also should consider hiring multilingual students to work as peer tutors (Westbrook & DeDecker, 1993).

With respect to international students' frequency and reasons for using the library, many questions remain unanswered. In particular, information is needed regarding how long they remain in the libraries, as well as the activities in which they spend the most time engaged. More research also is needed regarding the exact nature of library anxiety among non-native English speakers. For example, does the library anxiety exhibited by non-native English speakers reflect present experience or erroneous beliefs? Also, what role does facilitative anxiety play, if any? The answer to such questions will lead to a greater understanding of the needs of international students as they utilize academic libraries.

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Table 1

Discriminant Function Loadings, Canonical Correlation (R), F-values, and Group Centroids Discriminating Native and Non-native English Speaking Students (N = 522)

Variables	Discriminant Function Loadings
To study for a test	.37*
To study for a class project	.43*
To obtain a book or article for a course paper	.36*
To find out information about potential employer	.35*
To read books on reserve	.32*
To read current newspapers	.30*
To read own textbook	.33*
o return ! ooks	.25
To check out books	.24
To use the computerized indexes and online facilities	.13
To search and obtain information for a thesis/dissertation	.10
To use the photocopy machine	-.25
To meet friends	.20

R = 0.28 F = 3.30 ($p < 0.0001$)

Group	Group Centroids
Native English Speaker	-.17
Non-native English Speaker	.52

* significant loadings

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